

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 HEW-04 CA-01

L-03 VO-05 INSE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /054 W

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R 010300Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9074

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

USMISSION GENEVA

USUN NEW YORK 451

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 5242

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, SHUM, PORG, SN

SUBJ: DISCUSSIONS OVER SINGAPORE OFFER OF ISLAND FOR BOAT REFUGEES

REF: SINGAPORE 4880

1. EMBOFF INFORMALLY QUERIED DEPUTY UNHCR REGIONAL REP CARPENTER NOVEMBER 30 RE CURRENT STATUS OF UNHCR DISCUSSIONS WITH GOS OVER PRIME MINISTER LEE'S OFFER OF AN ISLAND FOR REFUGEE TRANSIT CAMP. CARPENTER SAID UNHCR REP SAMPATKUMAR HAD NOT MET PERSONALLY WITH GOS OFFICIALS SINCE-MEETING REPORTED REFTEL BUT HAD HAD SEVERAL PHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM. NOTHING NEW HAD COME FROM THE CONVERSATIONS, HOWEVER. ACCORDING TO CARPENTER, SAMPATKUMAR CABLED REPORT OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH GOS TO UNHCR HEADQUARTERS ON NOVEMBER 25 JUST BEFORE LEAVING FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA, WHERE HE IS NOW VISITING.

2. MEANWHILE, EDITORIAL IN NOVEMBER 30 STRAITS TIMES EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER BOAT REFUGEES, TERMING SITUATION "A MONUMENTAL HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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CRIES OUT FOR HUMANE TREATMENT". NOTING THAT RECENT ARRIVAL OF LARGE NUMBERS BOAT REFUGEES IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA HAD SPARKED OUTCRY FROM SOME SEGMENTS AUSTRALIAN POPULATION, EDITORIAL EXPRESSED HOPE THAT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT "WILL SHOW COMPASSION AND ACCEPT A FAIR QUOTA OF VIETNAM'S BOAT PEOPLE WHILE ASSURING THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC THAT ADDITIONAL REFUGEES

COULD BE ADMITTED WITHOUT TOO GREAT AN ECONOMIC PRICE".

3. COMMENT: IMPRESSION WE HAVE GAINED HERE IS THAT UNHCR REP SAMPATKUMAR AND STAFF HAVE BEEN TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH PROBLEMS IN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA TO PRESS GOS VERY HARD ON ISLAND OFFER. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT GOS IS RECONSIDERING OFFER, BUT SINGAPOREANS MAY BE HOLDING BACK A BIT TO SEE HOW REFUGEE SITUATION DEVELOPS IN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA. THOUGHT MUST HAVE OCCURRED TO THEM THAT THEY COULD BE SWAMPED WITH INCOMING REFUGEE BOATS IF WORD GOT OUT THAT THEY WERE OPENING REFUGEE CAMP AT VERY TIME THAIS WERE FORCING REFUGEE BOATS BACK TO SEA. COULD BE THAT HIGHER LEVEL UNHCR REPRESENTATIONS WILL BE NECESSARY TO OBTAIN EARLY GOS ACTION.

4. FOREGOING WAS DRAFTED BEFORE RECEIPT OF STATE 285189. WE AGREE THAT APPEAL BY HIGH COMMISSIONER HIMSELF WOULD BE BEST WAY TO SPEED UP REALIZATION OF THE PROJECT.
HOLDRIDGE

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Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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